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Alabama Chess Antics

Fall 2021

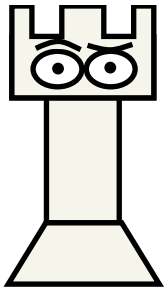
Inside this issue:

2021 Alabama State Championship Report *by Scott Varagona*	**4**
One Bad Move Can Ruin a Tournament *by Bill Melvin*	**8**
Photo Gallery: "The Masked Chess Player" *by various contributors*	**12**
Alabama Chess Hall of Fame: the Inaugural Class of 2021 *by Scott Varagona*	**13**
Khasanov-Strout *by Doug Strout*	**16**
Recent Results *from uschess.org*	**18**
Computers' Effects on Chess *by Bill Melvin*	**19**
Anthony-Alexander: a Sacrificial Attack *by Charles Anthony*	**22**

Chibuzo Ilonze: Alabama's 2021 State Champion.

(Photo by Doug Strout at the Evangel October Open.)

Greetings from the Editor



Tempus fugit. I blink my eyes, and it's time yet again for another issue of the *Antics*. A lot has happened since the last issue: among other things, we have a newly crowned Alabama State Champion and a brand new Alabama Chess Hall of Fame.

A full report on the State Championship, including crosstables for all sections, begins on page 4. We also have a couple of annotated games by Alabama's perennial state championship contender, NM (and Life Master) **Bill Melvin**—including his dramatic clash with the eventual tournament winner. While some of us bury the scoresheets of our losses in the back of a closet (or toss them in the nearest garbage bin!), Bill has always been willing to annotate his losses for the *Antics*. He should be commended for being sporting enough to do that.

The Alabama Chess Hall of Fame ceremony at the State Championship drew a lot of attention and excitement from the chess community. A full report, including synopses of all inductees' chess biographies, may be found on page 13.

Finally, we have annotated games from our faithful contributors **Doug Strout** and **Charles Anthony**, as well as a bonus article by **Bill Melvin** on computers and chess. Thank you, one and all, for supporting the *Antics* yet again.

Another piece of news: congratulations to **Aaron DeCord** for winning the *Antics* "Game of the Year" competition with his annotations of Fishbein-DeCord in the Summer 2021 *Antics*. Congratulations to **Scott Wilhelm** for winning "Photo of the Year" with his "King vs. Queen" photo on the cover of the Fall 2020 *Antics*.

Finally: the winner of "Game of the Quarter" for Fall 2021 is Melvin-Barnakov (see p. 9), annotated by **Bill Melvin**. The "Photo of the Quarter" by **Doug Strout**, featuring Chase Martin vs. Claiborne Davis (U1200 champion) at the Evangel October Open, is on the ACF website.

The deadline for submissions for the Winter 2022 issue of the *Antics* is March 15. Submit photos, games (preferably in .pgn format), and articles to **Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com**.

-Scott Varagona, 12-4-2021

ACF Membership

Any individual may become a **Regular Member** upon the payment of annual dues of **$15.00**. Regular members may enter ACF tournaments and receive special publications or notices from ACF as they are issued. Any chess club seeking to become an **Affiliate** is required to file the Affiliate Information Form with the Secretary of the ACF and pay annual dues of **$35.00**. Benefits of becoming an affiliate include the right to bid to host ACF-sanctioned events, such as the Alabama State Championship, and to receive advertising through the ACF for your tournaments.

Alabama Chess Leaderboard

Top 50 Regular Ratings (retrieved from uschess.org on 11/23/2021)

Only players with rating activity within the past year are listed.

1	IM STUART RACHELS	2605	26	KENNETH W GOODMAN	1878
2	MATTHEW PUCKETT	2272	27	JEFF TOBIN	1865
3	YURY A BARNAKOV	2271	28	BRIAN C WIGGIN	1862
4	SCOTT VARAGONA	2258	29	MICHAEL B GUTHRIE	1862
5	BILL MELVIN	2213	30	XAVIER BRUNI	1850
6	CHIBUZO ILONZE	2157	31	JOSHUA VARNER	1838
7	GERALD A LARSON	2133	32	GARY W BAWGUS	1816
8	AARON DECORD	2106	33	TIM BOND	1800
9	ZACHARY ISAAC SNOW II	2104	34	PATRICK DOWD	1799
10	BRENT INMAN	2095	35	JOSHUA WAKEFIELD	1781
11	JONATHAN RASBERRY	2092	36	SARVAGNA VELIDANDLA	1774
12	ANDY REEDER	2075	37	SAMUEL G BASKARRAJ	1764
13	TEJAS V THORAT	2066	38	VIKHRAM BALAGEE	1761
14	THOMAS J DENTON	2053	39	LAWRENCE D FISK	1759
15	GEORGE RUSYNIAK	2034	40	DAVID HAYES	1722
16	CONNOR V LUNNEY	2031	41	ALADDIN S LATEEF	1715
17	FARUK ESAT ERGIN	2007	42	KENNETH SLOAN	1700
18	CHARLES L MEIDINGER	2000	43	ETHAN J SMITH	1686
19	MILES MELVIN	1984	44	LUIS J MORENILLA	1667
20	WILLIAM DANIEL FOX	1983	45	JONATHAN SMITH	1657
21	OM BADHE	1969	46	GABRIEL TUZI NOLAND	1654
22	MICHAEL W PORCELLI	1914	47	MARIANO RUNCO	1615
23	JOEL NICK FRIEDMAN	1909	48	JACOB KIM	1614
24	SHERWOOD DONG	1909	49	KRISTIAN K JORDAN	1581
25	JEFFREY BYRD	1893	50	TOMASZ NIELSEN	1578

2021 Alabama State Championship Report

by NM Scott Varagona

The 2021 Alabama State Championship took place on September 18-19 at the HGI Eastchase in Montgomery. Despite the recent COVID-19 surge in Alabama, which has kept some players (including me) from playing OTB chess for a long while, this 5-round championship event had a strong turnout of 71 players across three sections.

The ACF, led by President Jonathan Rasberry and Vice President Bill Melvin, organized the event; Todd Guthrie was the TD.

Premier Section

Alabama has a new state champion: **Chibuzo Ilonze**. Having played in Oklahoma tournaments for the last few years, Dr. Ilonze recently moved to Alabama and has already proven to be a powerful force in our chess scene. His rating was 2103 at the start of the state championship; then, after going 5-0 against strong competition, his rating leaped up to 2161! If he keeps playing like this, he will be over 2200 in no time...

Here's how it happened. After defeating Class A & Class B players in rounds 1 & 2, Chibuzo had to face three very difficult tests in a row for rounds 3, 4, and 5. First, in round 3, he had Black against NM Yury Barnakov (2283), the top seed and one of the state's most dangerous players.

"Ilonze's game against Barnakov was interesting," said Bill Melvin, who witnessed the game first-hand. "At one point, Barnakov could capture a free piece. He took like 30-40 minutes on the move. I was double-checking to make sure it was his move and didn't understand why he was taking so long. He eventually did take the piece and soon had to give up his queen. He clearly saw all of that coming and couldn't do anything about it." In the end, Chibuzo won this crucial game.

Next, Chibuzo had to face the legendary NM Bill Melvin (2209), a long-time Alabama master and 8-time state champion. Bill had an excellent chance to win, but one bad slip cost him the game (see Bill's annotations on page 8) and Chibuzo moved to 4-0.

Finally, in the last round, Chibuzo would face Alabama's newly minted Online Grand Prix Champion, the underrated Faruk Ergin (1993). Mr. Ergin got second place at the 2020 Alabama State Championship, finishing just half a point behind the winner, so he was likely to be a contender in this 2021 championship as

well. Indeed, if Mr. Ergin had won this last round game, then he could have tied for first place—so the tension in his battle with Chibuzo must have been high.

"The last round game against Faruk looked competitive," said Bill Melvin. "I couldn't figure out what was going on and thought a draw was likely. Then a queen and rook were able to weave a mating net." Chibuzo was victorious once again.

By winning his last round game, Chibuzo finished the tournament with a 5-0 score. He is therefore the first Alabamian to get a perfect score in the Alabama State Championship since Charles Meidinger went 7-0 in 1994. (Other perfect scores have been achieved since then, but only by titled players visiting from out-of-state.) Congratulations to Chibuzo Ilonze for this outstanding result, and for taking a place in Alabama chess history.

2021 Alabama State Championship - Premier Section							
	Player	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Total
1	Chibuzo C. Ilonze	W 22	W 9	W 4	W 2	W 7	5
2	Bill Melvin	W 15	D 5	W 7	L 1	W 4	3.5
3	Joel N. Friedman	L 5	W 15	W 13	D 6	W 14	3.5
4	Yury A. Barnakov	W 14	W 13	L 1	W 5	L 2	3
5	Aaron DeCord	W 3	D 2	W 17	L 4	D 6	3
6	Zachary Isaac Snow II	W 8	L 7	W 11	D 3	D 5	3
7	Faruk Esat Ergin	W 20	W 6	L 2	W 9	L 1	3
8	Jeffrey Byrd	L 6	W 20	W 19	L 10	W 15	3
9	Sherwood Dong	W 21	L 1	W 14	L 7	W 17	3
10	Samuel Baskarraj	L 11	W 22	W 18	W 8	U	3
11	John Salisbury (MS)	W 10	H	L 6	W 17	U	2.5
12	Patrick Dowd	D 17	D 18	H	W 13	U	2.5
13	Miles Melvin	W 16	L 4	L 3	L 12	W 20	2
14	James E. Hargrove (LA)	L 4	W 16	L 9	W 19	L 3	2
15	Kenneth Goodman	L 2	L 3	W 16	W 20	L 8	2
16	Brian Bird (FL)	L 13	L 14	L 15	W 18	W 19	2
17	Charles Meidinger	D 12	W 19	L 5	L 11	L 9	1.5
18	Michael Porcelli	L 19	D 12	L 10	L 16	B	1.5
19	Jayashree Sekar (GA)	W 18	L 17	L 8	L 14	L 16	1
20	Kristian K. Jordan	L 7	L 8	B	L 15	L 13	1
21	Connor V. Lunney	L 9	U	U	U	U	0
22	Xavier Bruni	L 1	L 10	U	U	U	0

Tournament crosstable info from https://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?202109193242.1

Reserve Section

The Reserve Section (which featured players rated U1600) was very competitive and ended in a three-way tie for first. The three co-winners with 4 points each were **Saikarunya Kesireddy** (1481), **Tomasz Nielsen** (1562), and **Shawn Choi** (1443). As reported on the ACF's Facebook page, Saikarunya took the first place trophy on tiebreaks, Tomasz took second, and Shawn took third.

Amateur Section

The Amateur Section (U1200) was won by **Austin Peinhardt**, who got clear first with 4.5 points. He jumped from "Unrated" to a provisional rating of 1334 in a single weekend! Just behind him, tied with 4 points were Aiden Ray, Noah A. Martignoni, Edward Y. Xiao, and Michael Kennedy. The ACF's Facebook page reported that Edward took second, and Michael took third, on tiebreaks.

2021 Alabama State Championship - Reserve Section							
	Player	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Total
1	Tomasz Nielsen	W 12	W 18	D 9	W 5	D 2	4
2	Saikarunya Kesireddy	D 8	W 16	W 6	W 9	D 1	4
3	Shawn Choi	W 17	L 4	W 15	W 13	W 9	4
4	Benajmin E Kennedy	W 14	W 3	L 5	D 12	W 13	3.5
5	Hartwell K Forstman	D 15	W 8	W 4	L 1	W 12	3.5
6	Frank Zhao (WA)	W 20	D 13	L 2	D 11	W 14	3
7	Harshil Y Mehta	L 18	L 17	W 19	W 20	W 15	3
8	Wendell Whitaker	D 2	L 5	W 16	H	W 17	3
9	Cody L Smith	W 19	W 11	D 1	L 2	L 3	2.5
10	Douglas Strout	D 16	D 15	D 17	H	D 11	2.5
11	Derek J Miller	X	L 9	H	D 6	D 10	2.5
12	Michael W Connally	L 1	W 20	W 18	D 4	L 5	2.5
13	Sean F Brown (PA)	B	D 6	W 14	L 3	L 4	2.5
14	Constance Wang	L 4	W 19	L 13	W 17	L 6	2
15	Atindrah Harishankar	D 5	D 10	L 3	W 18	L 7	2
16	Kanishk Mahesh (GA)	D 10	L 2	L 8	D 19	W 20	2
17	Alister U Khasanov	L 3	W 7	D 10	L 14	L 8	1.5
18	Andrew Yang	W 7	L 1	L 12	L 15	D 19	1.5
19	Christopher Boothe	L 9	L 14	L 7	D 16	D 18	1
20	Robert Crouch	L 6	L 12	B	L 7	L 16	1
21	William Haley (GA)	F	U	U	U	U	0

Tournament crosstable info from https://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?202109193242.2

2021 Alabama State Championship - Amateur Section							
	Player	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Total
1	Austin K Peinhardt	W 20	W 12	W 6	W 7	D 4	4.5
2	Aiden Ray	W 13	W 10	L 5	W 17	W 7	4
3	Noah A Martignoni	L 14	W 28	W 13	W 16	W 10	4
4	Edward Y Xiao	W 28	D 14	W 8	W 5	D 1	4
5	Michael Kennedy	W 24	W 18	W 2	L 4	W 12	4
6	Michael C Smith	W 8	W 9	L 1	D 11	W 17	3.5
7	Paul K Laymon	W 27	W 19	W 15	L 1	L 2	3
8	Indigo M Daniels	L 6	W 23	L 4	W 14	W 19	3
9	Caroline A Wang	W 23	L 6	W 14	L 12	W 18	3
10	Claiborne C Davis	W 21	L 2	W 19	X	L 3	3
11	Patrick T Dowd	W 22	L 15	H	D 6	W 21	3
12	Max L Anderson (MS)	W 25	L 1	W 26	W 9	L 5	3
13	Aditya Y Mehta	L 2	W 21	L 3	W 22	W 23	3
14	Harisankar Sivakumaran	W 3	D 4	L 9	L 8	W 25	2.5
15	Justin Sly	W 16	W 11	L 7	F	U	2
16	Sarah E Peter	L 15	W 22	W 18	L 3	U	2
17	Whitney A Wadsworth	L 18	W 24	W 25	L 2	L 6	2
18	Ryan A Kruse	W 17	L 5	L 16	W 20	L 9	2
19	Mokun Ojesina	W 26	L 7	L 10	W 25	L 8	2
20	Matthew L Woods	L 1	L 25	W 27	L 18	W 28	2
21	Matthew S Thomson	L 10	L 13	W 28	W 26	L 11	2
22	Matthew Walker	L 11	L 16	B	L 13	W 26	2
23	Garve W Ivey IV	L 9	L 8	W 24	W 27	L 13	2
24	Mitchell R Jones	L 5	L 17	L 23	D 28	B	1.5
25	Hollis J Davis	L 12	W 20	L 17	L 19	L 14	1
26	Keela C Ainsworth	L 19	B	L 12	L 21	L 22	1
27	Jaxton Salisbury (MS)	L 7	H	L 20	L 23	U	0.5
28	Elijah L Posey	L 4	L 3	L 21	D 24	L 20	0.5

Tournament crosstable info from https://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?202109193242.3. ■

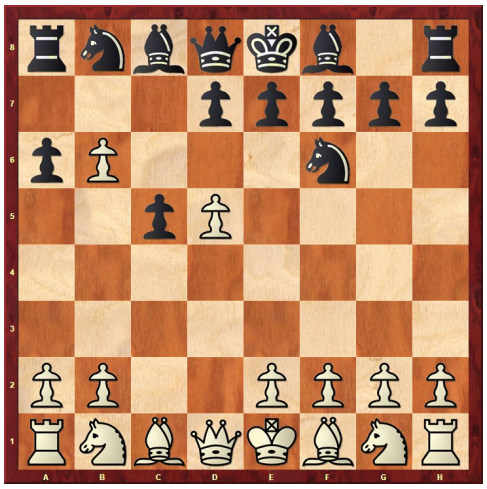
One Bad Move Can Ruin a Tournament

by NM Bill Melvin

Had a great State Championship. Played well and saw just about everything. Except for one move. And that one move was a howler costing me a legitimate shot at the title. Not a move I'll soon forget. Here are my last two rounds:

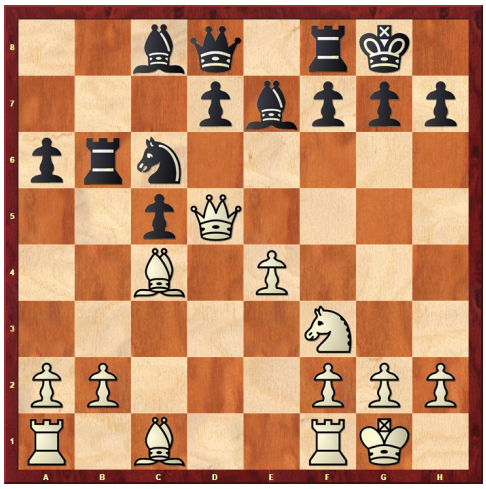
Chibuzo Ilonze - NM Bill Melvin
(2103) (2209)
Alabama State Ch. (Round 4), 9-19-2021

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.b6



Many players want to sidestep the main lines of the Benko Gambit. I actually see the off-lines a lot more often than the main lines. This particular variation is particularly popular. The line I am usually playing against 5...b6 involves attempting to recapture on b6 with the a8-rook. This puts pressure on the b-file and sometimes the rook can move along the 6th rank and participate in a kingside attack.

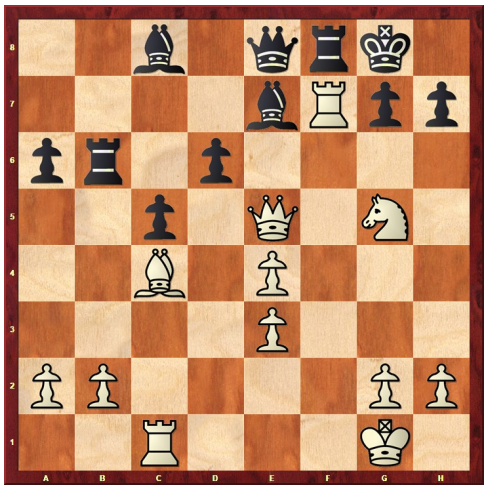
5...e6 6.Nc3 Nxd5 7.Nxd5 exd5 8.Qxd5 Nc6 9.e4 Be7 10.Bc4 0–0 11.Nf3 Rb8 12.0–0 Rxb6



All book and according to plan. This position was in my Chess Opening Wizard database (where I store all of my preparation) before the game began. I fully realize that it is probably a completely new position for my opponent. So, I played the previous moves slow enough to seed doubt that I might also be out of book in this

position. White has several ways to proceed. The 13.Ng5 move chosen is usually more effective with the queen on h5, so this leads to a position I have not seen before.

13.Ng5 Qe8 14.Be3 Nb4= [14...d6∓] **15.Qe5** [15.Qd2=] **15...Nc2 16.Rac1 Nxe3 17.fxe3 d6 18.Rxf7?**



Black had an advantage, but this move should lose immediately. All variations after 18...Rxf7 lead to the win of a piece for black. I was concerned about 19.Qf4 and increasing pressure on the f-file. This doesn't work out for white, though. I eventually convinced myself that taking the queen on e5 was the only move and I overlooked a mate in two. [18.Qg3 Bxg5 19.Qxg5 h6 20.Qg6 Bb7∓]

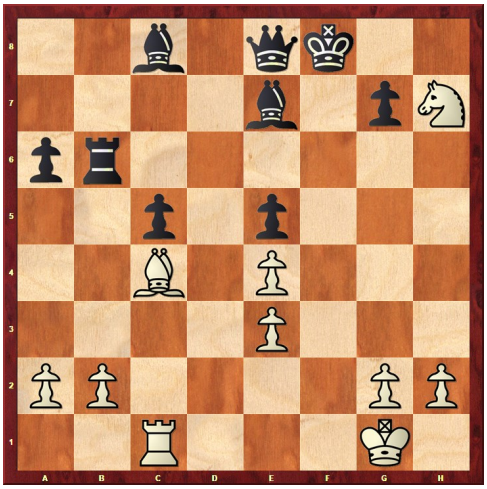
18...dxe5??

[18...Rxf7 19.Nxf7 (19.Qf4 Bxg5 20.Qxg5 *(20.Bxf7+ Qxf7 21.Qxg5 Rxb2 22.Rf1 Qe8 23.Qd5+ Qe6–+)* 20...d5 21.Bxd5 Be6–+) 19...dxe5 20.Nd6+ Kf8 21.Nxe8 Kxe8–+]

19.Rxf8+

Worst feeling in the world. It is double check, so black must move the king. Only one legal move. I let him play the checkmate.

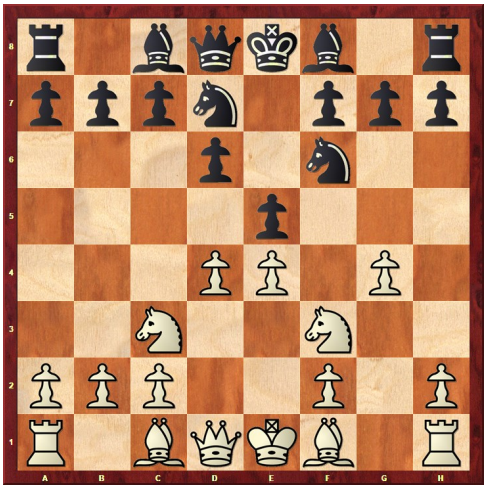
19...Kxf8 20.Nxh7# 1–0



Game of the Quarter:

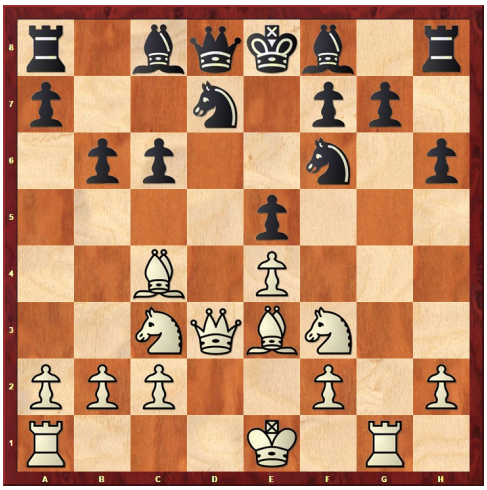
NM Bill Melvin - NM Yury Barnakov
(2209) (2283)
Alabama State Ch. (Round 5), 9-19-2021

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.g4



An idea that I first saw in ChessBase magazine. It has a decent theoretical reputation. The open lines and gain of time give white compensation for the pawn. Mostly just makes the position messy.

5...Nxg4 6.Rg1 Ngf6 7.Bc4 h6 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.Be3 c6 10.Qd3 b6



I was out in the streets around move 7. This is the first move not in my database. I am surprised that the bishop sacrifice is so sound. White is actually winning with perfect play.

11.Bxf7+ Kxf7 12.Nxe5+=

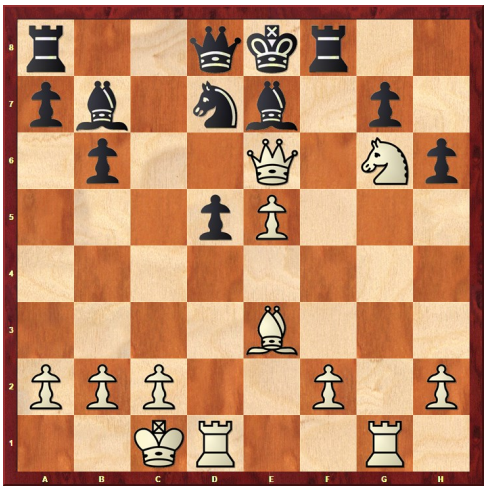
12.Qc4+! Stopping the king from retreating to g8 is apparently important and missed by both players. 12...Ke8 13.0–0–0+-.

12...Ke8+- [12...Kg8!=] **13.0–0–0 Bb7 14.Ng6**

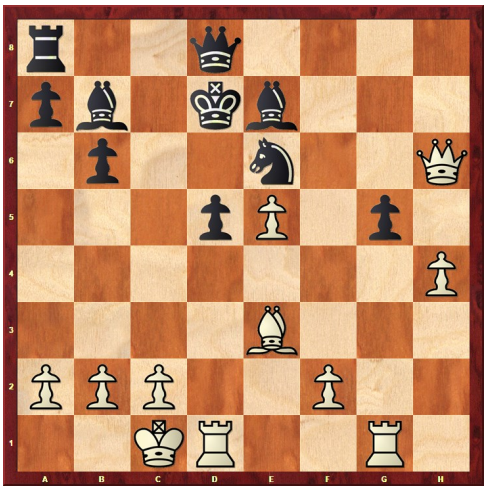
I had planned 14.Qc4? until I saw black's little trick. 14...Qe7 15.Ng6 Ne5=.

14...Rg8 15.e5 [15.Qc4! Be7 16.Qe6 Rf8 17.e5 Nd5 18.Ne4 Nc5 19.Bxc5 bxc5 20.Rxd5+- cxd5 21.Nd6++-]

15...Nd5 16.Nxd5 cxd5 17.Qf5 Be7 18.Qe6 Rf8

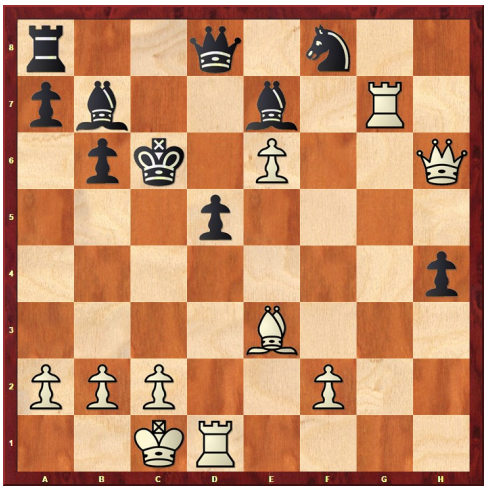


19.Nxf8± [19.Qg4 Nc5 20.e6 Qd6 21.Nxf8 Bxf8 22.Bf4+-] **19...Nxf8 20.Qg8 g5 21.Qh8 Kd7 22.Qxh6 Ne6 23.h4**

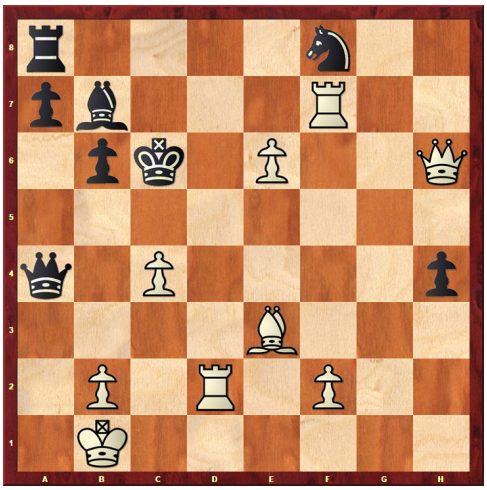


23...gxh4 [23...Qh8±] **24.Rg6+- Nf8 25.e6+ Kc6 26.Rg7!**

I originally planned 26.Rg8, but g7 is the best square for the rook. Black can never bring the king back to safety since ...Kc7 can always be answered by Bg5. Meanwhile, the e7-bishop can never leave because of the discovered check. This position is just really bad for black.



26...Qd6 27.c4 d4 28.Rxd4 Qc5 29.Rd2 Qa5 30.Rxe7 Qxa2 31.Rf7 Qa1+ 32.Kc2 Qa4+ 33.Kb1 1–0



My first ever win against Yury! Also good enough for shared second place. ■

Photo Gallery: "The Masked Chess Player"

By Various Contributors

Can you identify the chess players hidden behind these masks?...
Find the answers below!

1.

2.

3.

4.

1. *Michael Porcelli, winner of the 2021 Chris Bond Memorial (Premier Section) on August 7.*
2. *Kristian Kade Jordan, winner of the Reserve Section of the 2021 Chris Bond Memorial.*
3. *TD Caesar Lawrence (left) with Indigo Daniels, winner of the 2021 CBM Amateur Section.*
4. *Faruk Ergin (left) receives the Alabama Online Grand Prix Champion trophy from Jonathan Rasberry.*

Photos 1-3 submitted by Caesar Lawrence; photo 4 by Bill Melvin. ■

Alabama Chess Hall of Fame: The Inaugural Class of 2021

By Scott Varagona

At the 2021 Alabama State Championship, the ACF inducted five individuals into the first ever class of the **Alabama Chess Hall of Fame**.

These five individuals made outstanding contributions to Alabama chess culture over a long period of time, either through tournament play, tournament direction and organization, chess coaching, chess writing, or *Antics* editorship. Each inductee receives a plaque with their Hall of Fame biography, and the bio will also appear permanently on the Hall of Fame section of the ACF website.

The induction ceremony drew a good audience. Due to various unusual circumstances, not all inductees could be present at the ceremony. However, **Charles Meidinger** was present and became the first ever inductee.

Long-time *Antics* Editor **Lars Britt** was inducted posthumously; Alabama Chess Hall of Fame Committee member Paul Nager delivered a kind tribute to Lars, and then presented Lars' plaque to his family.

Lars Britt's family accepts the plaque on Lars' behalf. (Photo by Bill Melvin.)

Here is a brief summary of each inductee's Hall of Fame biography; the full biographies, along with photos and games, may be found on the ACF website.

1. Charles Meidinger has been playing tournament chess for over 40 years, and he has become one of Huntsville's all-time greatest players. He won or shared the Alabama State Champion title five times: in 1991, 1992, 1994, 2002, and 2012. Most notably, in

1994, he won the Alabama State Championship with a sensational 7-0 score; he is the only Alabamian to win with a perfect score in the last three decades. His patience, versatility, and fighting spirit at the chessboard have brought him many more successes, such as victories at Huntsville City Championships, Space City Opens, and other tournaments in Alabama and the Southeast. He has also represented Alabama at the National Tournament of Senior Champions. His peak rating was 2286.

Charles Meidinger. (Photo by Bill Melvin.)

2. Caesar Lawrence is the most prominent organizer and tournament director in Alabama Chess history. Since moving to Alabama in 1995, he has been Chief TD in well over 400 events. He started Caesar Chess in September 2009 and devoted himself full-time to coaching, organizing, and tournament directing. Caesar served as ACF Vice President from 1998 to 2004, and he has contributed mightily to the continuity of Alabama's most important tournaments, such as the State Championship and the Queen of Hearts. Two of Caesar's former chess students represented Alabama at the National Denker Tournament of High School Champions. Also, in 2014, the Alabama Senate passed a Joint Resolution "Recognizing the Work and Results of Caesar Lawrence, Alabama's Scholastic Chess Coach and Tournament Director." This reward was bestowed upon Caesar by Alabama's Governor.

3. Joseph Jurjevich is a five-time Alabama State Chess Champion with a chess career spanning nearly fifty years. He became a state champion or co-champion in 1980, 1989, 2002, 2006, and 2008. He became a National Master in 1985. He is known for his dangerous attacking style and for being a speed demon, often defeating his opponents while using very little time on his own clock. It is no accident that the *Antics* used to call him "the Bay Minette Flash."

4. Stuart Rachels is Alabama's

greatest player of the 20th century. His status as a chess prodigy was confirmed when, in the summer of 1981, he became the youngest ever U.S. National Master up to that point, at the age of 11 years and 10 months old. He then became an Alabama State Champion for five consecutive years from 1982 to 1986, also winning countless other notable Alabama tournaments along the way. In 1988, he won the U.S. Junior Championship. He played in the 1989 U.S. Championship as a huge underdog, being an FM in a field of GMs. Still, against all odds, he tied for first and became a U.S. Co-Champion and an International Master. He retired from tournament play in 1993, but recently returned to play in the 2021 Alabama Quick & Blitz Championship and to promote his award-winning book, *The Best I Saw in Chess*.

5. Lars Britt is a significant individual in the history of Alabama chess, particularly in the documentation and recording of Alabama chess history from the mid-1970s to the turn of the century. He directed the historic Mobile-Baldwin County Chess League for some 20+ years, and directed over 100 tournaments. He served as chief editor of the Alabama Chess Federation's quarterly published *Alabama Chess Antics* from 1978 to 1988, before the era of desktop publishing. The labor of the *Antics* included typing up the articles, formatting, copying, stapling, addressing, stamping, and mailing them to the tune of some 250 copies, four or five times a year for over a decade. The pages within included tournament results, ads for coming tournaments, photos with captions, and annotated games submitted by players. A truly rich archive of Alabama chess history. Lars also worked in the arts, and this skill came out in the flair of creativity expressed in the *Antics*.

* * *

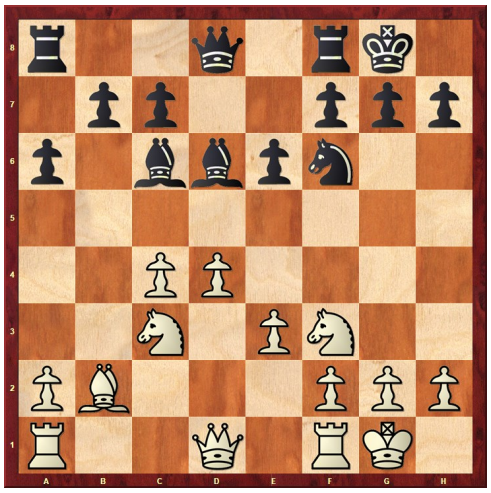
To conclude, I'd like to thank Bill Melvin and Paul Nager for serving with me on the Hall of Fame committee and Jonathan Rasberry for providing input. I would also like to remind everyone to look ahead to next year's induction. If you know of an Alabama chess hero who you think would deserve to be in the Hall of Fame, contact me about that at Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com.
Names of potential candidates must be submitted by the last Saturday of February. ■

Khasanov-Strout

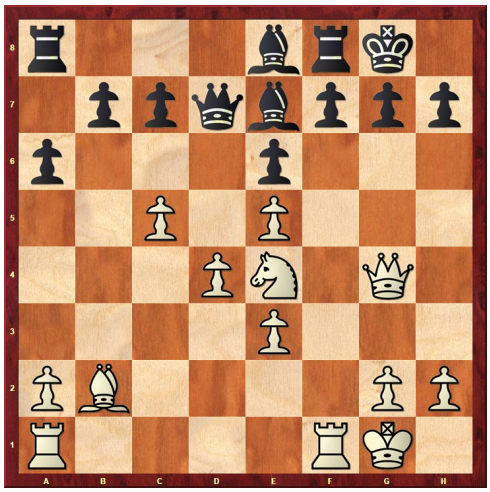
By Doug Strout

A. Khasanov (1263) - D.L. Strout (1500)
Evangel October Open (Round 4)
Montgomery, AL; 10-16-2021

1.Nf3 Nc6 It's the fourth and final round of the Evangel October Open. I'm playing Alisher Khasanov, who is in clear first with 2.5/3. If he wins, he finishes clear first in the U1800 section. I'm 1.5/3 and at most playing for a piece of 2nd place. **2.d4 d5 3.e3 Bf5 4.Bb5 Bd7** Have to slow my development a bit to break this pin. **5.0–0 e6** Now I've committed my light-square bishop to staying home on defense. **6.b3 Nf6 7.Bb2 Bd6 8.c4 a6 9.Bxc6 Bxc6 10.Nc3 dxc4 11.bxc4 0–0**

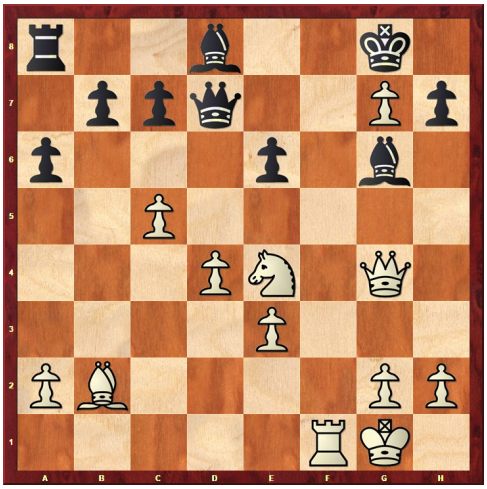


Finally, I get castled to complete my development. **12.c5 Be7** He leans on my bishop with c5. This also weakens the b7 pawn. I suppose if needed I could try ...b5 cxb6 e.p. cxb6. **13.Ne5 Be8 14.f4 Nd7 15.Qg4 Nxe5 16.fxe5** I've let him open f-file, but I think I have enough defenders at f7. f8 rook is really cramped, though. **16...Qd7 17.Ne4**

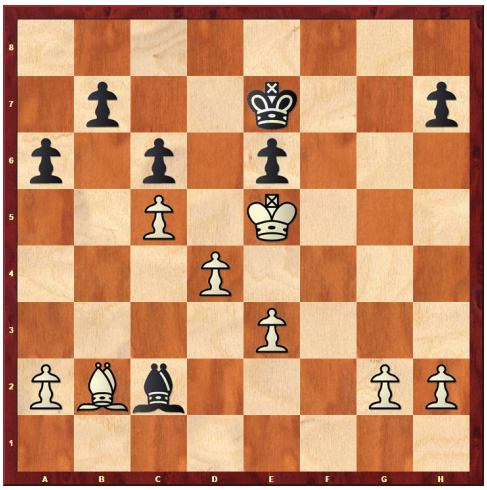


17…f5 A mistake on my part because, although in most games of this kind I can safely allow the e.p. capture at f6, the pin on the g7 pawn is a problem. **18.exf6 Bd8** ...Bxf6 is unplayable because the g7 pawn is unavailable for takebacks. ...Bxf6 Nxf6+ would fork my queen and force ...Rxf6 Rxf6, and I've totally lost. **19.fxg7 Rf7 20.Rxf7 Bxf7 21.Rf1 Bg6** Breaking the connection between the queen and the f7 pawn, but I feel like ...Kxf7 is dangerous for me

because of d5+.

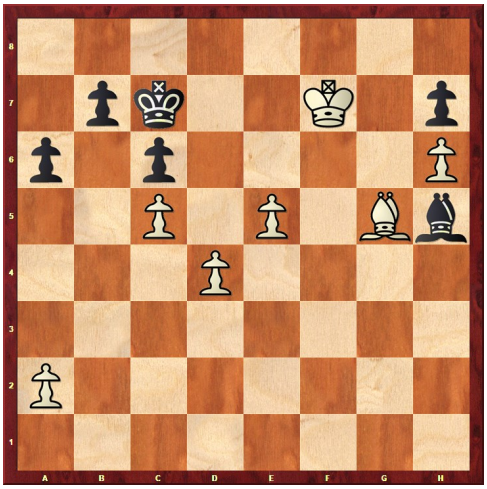


22.Nf6+ Interesting choice here. I'm making mistakes and getting pushed around for it. I'm basically being forced to trade down to an opposite-bishop ending, which I might do anyway under these circumstances to increase my drawing chances. Additionally, I needed to move my dark-square bishop anyway to free the a8 rook. **22...Bxf6 23.Rxf6 Re8** Needed another defender for e6. **24.Qf4 Qe7** Needed another defender for the f8 square. **25.Qe5 c6** I have two pawns hitting d5 now, which I am hoping at least slows any central pawn advance by white. Still can't take the f7 pawn. **26.Rf8+ Rxf8 27.gxf8Q+ Kxf8 28.Qb8+** Menacing a well-protected pawn and giving my king an escape to a light square. I think I'm OK here. Does white have a better move? **28...Kf7 29.Qf4+ Ke8** Not putting my king on g7 with a bishop on b2. **30.Kf2 Qf7** Forcing a queen trade and increasing my drawing chances, I think. Down a pawn in an opposite bishop ending, I'll take it. I make this move and offer a draw. **31.Qxf7+** He declines the draw offer. Since a win for him gets clear first in the section, can't say I blame him for playing on. **31...Kxf7** I think a king advance is the right choice here. **32.Kf3 Bd3 33.Kf4 Bc2 34.Ke5 Ke7** I wasted a couple of moves with my bishop, but I have to stop his king from getting queenside.



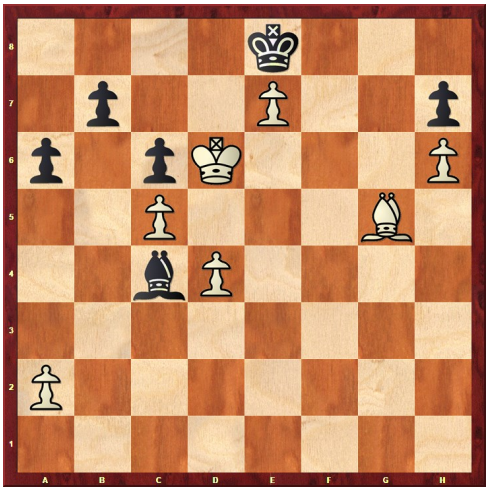
35.Bc1 Bg6 36.e4 Kd7 37.Bh6 He's getting his bishop into the attack, exactly what he should do. **37...Ke7 38.g4 Kd7 39.h4 Ke7 40.h5 Be8 41.Bg5+ Kd7** Still have to keep the queenside closed off as best I can. **42.Kf6 Kc7 43.Kxe6 Bd7+** Winning the g4 pawn and freeing my bishop. **44.Kf7 Bxg4 45.h6 Bf3 46.e5 Bh5+** Allowing me to reconnect with the h7 pawn. The e5

passer is still dangerous obviously.



47.Kf8 Kd7 48.Kg7 Bg6 49.Kf6 If he lets me play ...Ke6, I have enough position to hold the draw, so he has to prevent it. **49...Ke8 50.e6** Is e6 or Ke6 better for white here?* **50...Be4 51.Ke5 Bd3 52.Kd6 Bc4 53.e7**

** 50.Ke6 does not help because 50...Bf7+! 51.Kd6 Bxa2 drops the a-pawn. It looks like Black will have a fortress, and the computer agrees. –Ed*



Pawn a4 then a5 would be better, because dropping a2 actually gives me some counterplay. **53...Bxa2 54.Kc7 Bd5 55.Kxb7 a5** Now I have a passer that will distract his bishop. **56.Kc7 a4 57.Kd6 a3 58.Bd2 a2 59.Bc3 Be4** Draw agreed. This boosts him to 3.0/4. Jayashree Sekar won her game to also reach 3.0/4, but Alisher still tied for the championship, received a nice prize and made 130 rating points. Very well done. ½–½ ■

Recent Results (from uschess.org)

Evangel October Open: 10-16-2021
TD: Doug Strout.

Open Winner: **Chibuzo Ilonze**, 3.5/4
Reserve Winners: **Jayashree Sekar & Alisher Khasanov**, 3/4
U1200 Winner: **Claiborne Chester Davis**, 4/4

Halloween Classic: 10-30-2021
TD: Caesar Lawrence.

Premier Winner: **Faruk Ergin**, 4/4
Reserve Winner: **Victor Lundy**, 4/4. ■

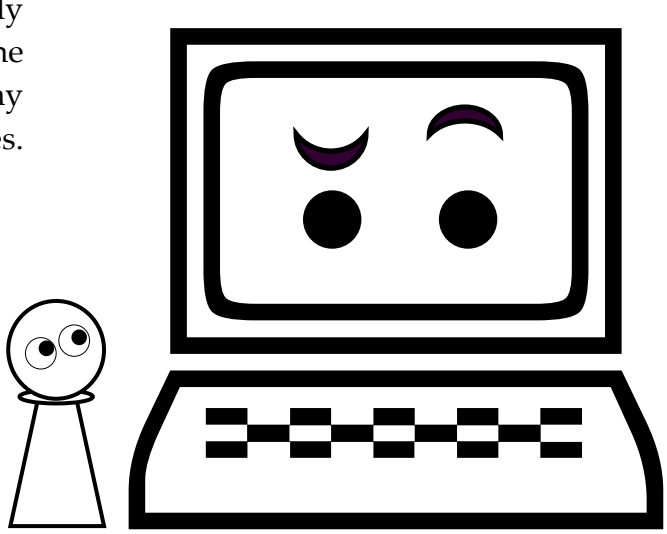
Computers' Effects on Chess

By NM Bill Melvin

Before the computer revolution in chess, we always had the fear that people would stop playing chess when computers got better than humans. Endless debates were held on the effects of these silicon monsters. Eventually chess computers became more powerful than we ever dreamed they could become. Chess remains as popular as ever. Yet, I don't believe we fully comprehend how drastically computers have changed the game of chess.

I've got a box of old scoresheets from my first 20 years of tournaments that haven't been entered into a computer database yet. That's a big project for another day. I recall in the 1980s and 1990s that I had many games where I did not understand how they were won or lost. Just a seemingly mistake-free game where all of the sudden one side was winning. Many hours were spent studying such games. Positions were shown to strong players. But the mystery seemed unfathomable. Fast forward to now. The computer shows every minor and major mistake in every game. We've come to accept that the computer's judgment is correct 99% of the time (with the exceptions being certain types of positions involving horizon effects and not letting the computer "analyze" long enough). We rarely consult a stronger player about a mistake made in a game. We used to routinely have post mortems with nearly every opponent after nearly every game to get their thoughts. Now, a post mortem is relatively rare. Computers have replaced humans as chess advisors for strong players.

For middlegame positions, we had a bunch of tried-and-true chess principles that had existed since before Nimzovich. We loved books that would pronounce things like "A knight



on the rim is grim." "Develop knights before bishops." "Queen and knight are better than queen and bishop." "Rook endings are drawish." Computers don't spout any of this nonsense. John Watson wrote a wonderful book called *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy: Advances since Nimzovich* where he pretty much concludes that all of the general principles we once held so dearly are hogwash. Knights are moved to the rim all the time. To discount a knight move because of some silly saying is ruling out the best move unnecessarily. This is pretty much the case for all the sayings. The best move always depends on a number of factors. The easy-to-remember rules of thumb from the pre-computer era are just a handicap. The computer will tell you about the best move in any given position and it doesn't have to follow an easy-to-remember formula. The knight may go to the rim. An ending with queen and bishop may be easier to win. A rook ending could be an easier way to convert an advantage.

Computers have revolutionized opening theory. Countless novelties have been found by them. Opening preparation involves looking at recent Grandmaster games in a variation, but also checking out the computer. I recall discussing a particularly sharp opening with the father of an Expert after a hard-fought draw in a variation we had previously played (and thus both prepared extensively). I'm sure I outrated this father by at least 1200 rating points. But, he was present while his son was doing the research aided by the trusty computer. He was able to let me know that my move was "ok" and one of those that the computer considered, but not the best. The entire experience was surreal.

In the old days, we had a stack of ECOs. The *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* was the bible for chess players. It was published in Yugoslavia and included analysis from all the greatest chess players. It was updated with the Chess Informant 2-3 times a year with the latest games played by the world's top chess players. Top players annotated these games (yes, including Bobby Fischer!). This was the pinnacle of opening preparation. Well, they are still updating the ECOs and Informants. But, I can't remember the last time I saw one at a tournament. Everyone is using databases now. They have all the latest games. I doubt there are any IMs or GMs who do not use ChessBase. A database plus an engine is all that most people are using for opening preparation anymore.

Some of the effects of using computers for chess can have negative effects. ChessBase is riddled with games where the most popular move or the highest scoring move is actually a mistake. Certain traps are fallen into repeatedly by humans. In rare instances, the main line may even be an objective mistake! The use of computer engines can help alleviate most of these problems, but the user needs to be conscious that engine evaluations are not always going to coincide with database statistics.

Finally, most engines only give you a numeric number. 0.00 is a draw. +1.00 means White is a pawn up. -1.00 means Black is a pawn up. Only, the computer evaluation changes the deeper it probes. You might have three moves near +0.23 in value, but it is easy to be lazy to just pick the highest score for your side and not consider the rest. The problem is that many times a choice needs to be made between a dynamic move that offers winning chances and a chance for your opponent to misplay and a dead draw. Some of the more recent neural network engines may take this into consideration and select the most active continuation. But, for most of us, we are just seeing +0.23. Which could lead to a dead draw whereby the +0.21 line could force Black to find five perfect moves in a row to avoid being swept off the board.

Humans know they will be facing other humans. Computers assume they will be facing perfect play from other computers. Complicated moves that humans are likely to misplay can offer better results than the top computer move. In the pre-computer days, we might ask ourselves: "If I had this position 100 times against my opponent, which move would score the best result?" People have credited Emmanuel Lasker with deliberately selecting weaker moves in order to later outplay opponents. Anyone who has played a gambit speculatively sacrificing material is using this approach. Computer engines don't usually like gambits (or even some mainstay openings like the King's Indian Defense!). Plug a Benko Gambit position into a computer engine and it will tell you: "Yep, Black just lost a pawn. Has absolutely nothing for it."

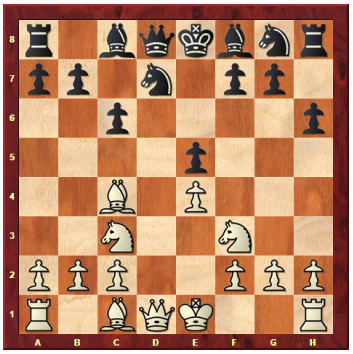
Let's hope you read this article quickly, because computers have not stopped changing chess. I look for advancements in neural networks and chess training to further revolutionize the chess world. And probably 20 other ways that we feeble humans cannot hope to anticipate. ■

Anthony-Alexander: a Sacrificial Attack

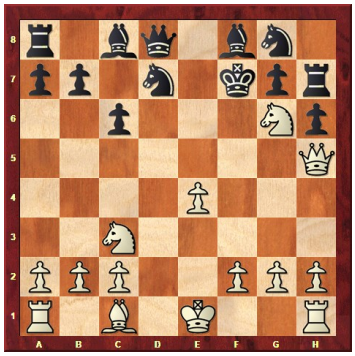
By Charles Anthony

Charles Anthony - Roy Alexander
Casual Game, January 2, 1991

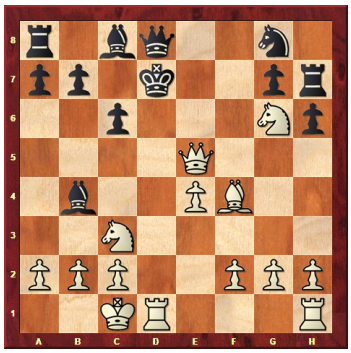
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bc4 h6 4.Nc3 c6 White has three minor pieces developed. Black has moved only pawns. There's a sacrifice in the wind. **5.d4 Nd7 6.dxe5 dxe5**



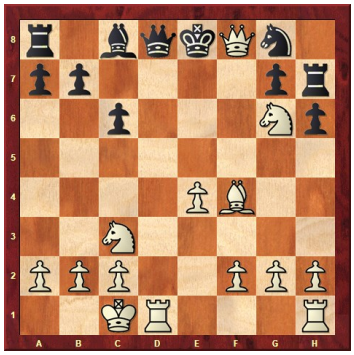
Several traps are now possible. **7.Bxf7+!** First, I keep the king in the center. **7...Kxf7 8.Nxe5+ Ke6** Not 8...Nxe5, losing the queen. **9.Ng6 Rh7 10.Qg4+ Kf7 11.Qh5**



11…Bb4 Pinning the knight, but this knight will not be needed. **12.Ne5+** Actually a double check, meaning the king must move! **12...Ke6 13.Qf5+ Ke7 14.Ng6+ Kd6 15.Bf4+** The king is now trapped, with nowhere to escape. **15...Ne5 16.Qxe5+** The king has only one move! **16...Kd7 17.0–0–0+** Again, the king has no escape square.



17...Bd6 A useless interposition, but it was forced. **18.Qxd6+** Mate in one! **18...Ke8 19.Qf8#**



1–0. ■

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Upcoming Tournaments

See www.alabamachess.org for updates on these and other events.

December 4, 2021	**ChessKidsNation OTB Chess Tourn.**	**Birmingham, AL**
January 8, 2022	**Dothan Open**	**Dothan, AL**
January 22, 2022	**Evangel 2022 Open**	**Montgomery, AL**
February 26, 2022	**Tom Nard Memorial VIII**	**Montgomery, AL**

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To submit articles, pictures and games to the *Antics*, email the *Antics* editor at

Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com

Games in .pgn format are strongly preferred.

Please contact **jonathan.rasberry@alabamachess.org** if you are interested in helping with the Alabama Chess Federation.

All chess diagrams in this issue were produced using *Fritz*, a program by *ChessBase*.

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